

GENERAL SCHEDULE #24 – City and Village Clerks

This schedule supersedes section seven of the Michigan Municipal League's "Records Management Handbook" that was approved in April 1998.

This Retention and Disposal Schedule covers records that are commonly found in **city and village clerk** offices. The records that are described on the attached pages are deemed necessary (1) for the continued effective operation of Michigan government, (2) to constitute an adequate and proper recording of its activities, and (3) to protect the legal rights of the government of the State of Michigan and of the people. We, the undersigned, believe that this schedule meets the administrative, legal, fiscal and archival requirements of the State of Michigan.

Ann Ulrich

Ann Ulrich, CMC, President
Michigan Association of Municipal Clerks

AUG. 20, 2008

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GENERAL RETENTION SCHEDULE #24 CITY AND VILLAGE CLERKS INTRODUCTION

Public Records

The Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([MCL 15.231-15.246](#)) defines public records as recorded information “prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created.”

Retention and Disposal Schedules

Michigan law (MCL [399.5](#) and [750.491](#)) requires that all public records be listed on an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule that identifies the minimum amount of time that records must be kept to satisfy administrative, legal, fiscal and historical needs. Local situations may require retention beyond the periods listed, and nothing prevents an office from retaining records longer than the specified period of time. Schedules also identify when records may be destroyed, and when certain records can be sent to the Archives of Michigan for permanent preservation.

Records cannot be destroyed unless their disposition is authorized by an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. All schedules are approved by the Records Management Services, the Archives of Michigan and the State Administrative Board. There are two types of schedules that government agencies may use:

- A “general schedule” will cover records that are common to a particular type of government agency, such as a clerk’s office. General schedules may not address every single record that a particular office may have in its possession. *General schedules do not mandate that any of the records listed on the schedule be created.* However, if they are created in the normal course of business, the schedule establishes a minimum retention period for them.
- Any record that is not covered by a general schedule must be listed on an “agency-specific schedule” that will address records that are unique to a particular government agency. Agency-specific schedules always supersede general schedules. Agency-specific schedules only address the records of the agency named on the schedule, and may not be used by another agency.

This schedule supersedes section seven of the Michigan Municipal League’s “Records Management Handbook” that was approved in April 1998. Elections records are covered separately on General Schedule #23—Elections Records that was approved in 2007.

Unofficial Documents

General Schedule #1 addresses the retention of “nonrecord” materials. These documents are broadly defined as drafts, duplicates, convenience copies, publications and other materials that do not document agency activities. These materials can be disposed of when they have served their intended purpose. Government agencies need to identify the “office of record” when multiple offices possess copies of the same record. The “office of record” is responsible for

following the retention period that is specified, duplicates do not need to be retained. A more comprehensive definition of “nonrecords” can be found in the approved schedule (available online at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_mhc_rms_GS1_local_110758_7.pdf).

Record Maintenance

Records can exist in a wide variety of formats, including paper, maps, photographs, microfilm, digital images, e-mail messages, databases, etc. The retention periods listed on this general schedule do not specify the format that the record may exist in, because each government agency that adopts this schedule may choose to retain its records using different recording media. Government agencies are responsible for ensuring that all of their records (regardless of format) are properly retained and remain accessible during this entire retention period. All records need to be stored in a secure and stable environment that will protect them from tampering, damage and degradation. Electronic records are dependent upon specific hardware and software to be accessed and used. It is important to understand that the original technology that is used to create electronic records will eventually become obsolete. As a result, government agencies should work with their information technology staff to develop preservation plans for retaining electronic records with long-term (more than 10 years) retention requirements. Various laws (including the Records Reproduction Act, [MCL 24.401-24.406](#)) identify acceptable formats for retaining public records; agencies are responsible for understanding and complying with these laws.

Suspending Destruction

Government agencies must immediately cease the destruction of all relevant records (even if destruction is authorized by an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule) if they receive a FOIA request, if they believe that an investigation or litigation is imminent, or if they are notified that an audit, investigation or litigation has commenced. If relevant records exist in electronic formats (such as e-mail, digital images, word processed documents, databases, backup tapes, etc.), the agency may need to notify its information technology staff. Failure to cease the destruction of relevant records could result in penalties.

HAL Can Help!

The State of Michigan Records Management Services is available to assist government agencies with their questions about record retention and acceptable recording media. Agencies may contact the Records Management Services at (517) 335-9132. Additional information is also available from the Records Management Services’ website <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>, including records management manuals, general schedules, e-mail retention guidelines, microfilming standards and digital imaging standards, etc.

**General Retention Schedule #24
City and Village Clerks**

Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
General Administrative		
100	<u>Subject Files</u>	ACT+5
	<p>These records are used to support administrative analysis, program and project planning, procedure development, and programmatic activities. Subject files are generally organized alphabetically by topic. Document types may include periodic activity reports (narrative and statistical), special reports, topical correspondence (including electronic mail), research materials, project planning notes, organizational charts, etc. Subject files do NOT include files related to individual program activities, human resources files, and accounting records. For topics of continuing interest, files may be segmented into annual files. ACT = while topical file is of interest for ongoing administration. Some topical files may have historical value and should be preserved permanently.</p>	
101	<u>General Correspondence</u>	CR+2
	<p>General correspondence does not pertain to a specific issue and it is often organized chronologically or by correspondent's name. General correspondence may include referral correspondence. If the correspondence does pertain to a specific issue it should be filed with other relevant records. General correspondence may exist in a variety of formats, including memos, letters, notes and electronic mail messages. This series also includes automated or manual tools that index and/or track when correspondence was received, the topic of the correspondence, who is responsible for responding to the correspondence, and when the correspondence is considered closed for further action.</p>	
102	<u>Transitory Correspondence</u>	EVT
	<p>Transitory correspondence is any form of written communication with a short-term interest that has no documentary value. This type of correspondence has limited administrative and evidential value that is lost soon after the communication is received. Transitory messages do not set policy, establish guidelines or procedures, certify a transaction or become a receipt. Examples of transitory correspondence include letters of transmittal that do not add information to the transmitted materials, routine requests for information that require no administrative action, policy decision, special compilation or research. This type of record also includes invitations to work-related events, notifications of an upcoming meeting, and similar records. EVT = need not be retained more than 30 days after receipt.</p>	

**General Retention Schedule #24
City and Village Clerks**

Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
103	<u>Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) Requests</u>	CR+1
	<p>This file will document any requests for information or public records. They may include requests for information, correspondence, a copy of the information released, and billing information. Any written request for a public record is a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request, and a written request for information may be a FOIA request and should be handled as one. Each city or village is required by the FOIA to designate a FOIA Coordinator. This is not automatically the clerk, but it may be the clerk or another official or employee. Copies of FOIA requests and other records related to FOIA requests may be filed with the FOIA Coordinator's records or maintained in a central administrative file.</p>	
104	<u>Planners/Calendars</u>	CR+2
	<p>These may be electronic or manual planners and calendars that are used to track an individual staff member's work-related meetings, assignments, and tasks. Individual employees are responsible for retaining their planners/calendars for the duration of this retention period.</p>	
105	<u>Staff and Project Meeting Records</u>	CR+2
	<p>These records document staff meetings, meetings with other government agencies, etc. These records do not include council meetings and other official boards, committees or commissions. They may include meeting minutes, agendas, and distribution materials, etc. Meeting records may also be retained in subject files, if they relate to a specific project.</p>	
106	<u>Grants</u>	ACT
	<p>These files are used to administer grants that are applied for by the office from state, federal and private agencies. These files may contain applications, budgets, worksheets, adjustments, plans, rules and regulations, award letters, committee records, staffing sheets with account numbers, grant evaluation/monitoring reports, audits, periodic progress reports, etc. ACT = until the grant is closed out, plus any additional time that is required by the granting agency for auditing purposes. Final reports and products of the grant may be kept longer for use and reference purposes.</p>	
107	<u>Publications</u>	ACT
	<p>These records may include press releases, brochures, newsletters, annual reports and other items that are published by the office. ACT = while of</p>	

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
	reference value. Offices are strongly encouraged to keep one copy permanently for historical purposes.	
108	<u>Policies, Procedures and Directives</u>	SUP
	These records document the policies procedures of the clerk's office. It may also include an administrative manual of all city and village functions. SUP = only the current document must be retained. Superseded versions may be destroyed.	
109	<u>Clerk's Office Budget</u>	CR+5
	These records document the amount of money that is appropriated for each account/line item for the current and previous fiscal years for the clerk's office. They may include budget requests, statistics, budget amendments, budget summaries and balance sheets, etc. This is not the official city or village budget.	
110	<u>Memorabilia</u>	ACT
	This series includes photographs, news clippings, certificates, awards, etc. that document events and activities of the office. ACT = while of reference value to the office. Offices are strongly encouraged to retain select items permanently for historical purposes.	

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City and Village Clerks**

Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
Council/Commission		
200	<u>Meeting Records--Open Sessions</u>	PERM
	<p>These records document the proceedings of the city or village council/commission and any subcommittees or advisory committees. They include the approved minutes and agenda packets containing any materials that are distributed to members for review (such as budgets, ordinances, resolutions, action items, policies, contracts, etc). They may include full transcriptions of the proceedings, and topical indexes. This series does not include meeting notices (see item #203), bulletins, clippings, citizen requests (see item #204) or documentation of meeting-related expenditures. These records are preserved permanently to document the institutional memory of the city or village. Cities and villages are encouraged to contact the Archives of Michigan for assistance if they cannot retain these records permanently.</p>	
201	<u>Meeting Notes and Audio or Video Recordings</u>	EVT
	<p>Notes and audio or visual recordings of meetings of a public body of the city or village made for the purpose of transcribing the minutes may be destroyed after the meeting at which the minutes are approved by the public body. EVT = one day after the date that the meeting minutes are approved. (MCL 15.269).</p>	
202	<u>Meeting Records--Closed Session</u>	EVT
	<p>These records consist of minutes taken during a closed session of the council/commission, including any audio or visual recordings. Approved closed session minutes must be sealed and retained by the clerk, are not available to the public, and shall only be disclosed if required by a civil action filed in circuit court or the court of appeals under sections 10, 11, or 13 of the Open Meetings Act. EVT = Closed session meeting records may be destroyed 1 year and 1 day after approval of the minutes of the regular meeting at which the closed session was approved.</p>	
203	<u>Meeting Records--Official Boards, Committees and Commissions</u>	PERM
	<p>These records document the proceedings of the official boards, committees and commissions (such as an historical commission, arts commission, development authority, board of review, civil service board, etc.). Members of these boards are appointed by the city or village council/commission. These records include the approved minutes and agenda packets containing any materials that are distributed to members</p>	

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
	<p>for review and action. In some cities and villages, each of these bodies are responsible for providing the clerk with the official copy of the approved minutes and agenda packets. In some cities and villages, these records are maintained separately by the public body. Regardless, of where they are maintained, this retention period applies.</p>	
204	<p><u>Posted Notices of a Public Meeting</u></p> <p>The Open Meetings Act (MCL 15.265) requires that notices of public meetings be posted. Specifically, the annual schedule must be posted at the beginning of the year, any changes to the annual schedule must be posted within 3 days of the change, and any special meeting must be posted at least 18 hours in advance. This series covers copies of the posted notices of any meeting, including annual schedules and special meetings.</p>	CR+1
205	<p><u>Citizen Requests</u></p> <p>These requests are received from citizens who want to be heard by the city or village council/commission. They may relate to events, street closings, contract protests, complaints, requests for hearings, investigations, rallies, etc. These records may be in the form of correspondence or application forms. Depending upon the issue, they may need to be reviewed by another city or village department (in which case a report may be generated and retained as part of the record series). Some requests may need to be approved by the council (with our without conditions).</p>	CR+1
206	<p><u>Member Files</u></p> <p>These files contain information about people who served on the council/commission and appointees to other official boards, committees and commissions. They may contain applications, biographical information, petitions, conference/training requests, correspondence, etc. ACT = While individual is serving as a member.</p>	ACT
207	<p><u>Board Member Applications</u></p> <p>These records are applications from residents who are interested in serving on a city or village board, committee, commission, etc. If they are appointed, this record will become part of the member file (see item #205).</p>	CR+2

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
208	<u>Rosters</u> These records list who served on a particular board, committee, commission, etc., and the dates of their term as a member of the public body.	PERM
209	<u>Oaths of Office</u> Certain public officials are required to sign an oath of office.	PERM
210	<u>Charter</u> The charter provides the legal framework for operations of the city or village's government. It defines boundaries, how the city or village operates on a daily basis, the responsibilities and authority of various public officials, and regulations that are adopted by the council/commission. The document is revised over time, however superseded versions will be retained permanently as an historical record.	PERM
211	<u>Ordinances</u> Codified ordinances document all laws enacted by the council/commission. They may include the text of the ordinance, public notices and vote sheets. A copy of these records may be compiled into a published codebook and database.	PERM
212	<u>Resolutions</u> These resolutions are adopted by the council/commission. They include the language of the resolution and any supporting documents for the resolution.	PERM
213	<u>Budget</u> The budget is approved by the council/commission. It documents revenues and expenditures, and allocations for each department. This record contains the final version, and any supplemental versions, revisions or amendments that are approved for each fiscal year.	PERM
214	<u>Annual Reports</u> Departments may submit annual reports to the chief elected official's office where they are compiled into a single annual report of the city or	PERM

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
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village's activities. The official copy of the departmental reports, as well as the compiled report, are maintained by the clerk.

215	<u>Published Public Notices</u>	ACT
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Public notices may be required to be published by statute, local ordinance or grant requirement. These records serve as evidence that the city or village provided public notice of elections, hearings, ordinance enactments or revisions, police auctions, bids, etc. in local news media. They may include Affidavits of Publication, clippings, and copies of the printer's bill/invoice. The city or village's finance/accounting office is the official recordkeeper for the billing records. These records may be retained with the other records that pertain to the event listed in the public notice. ACT = these records inherit the retention period of other record series, depending upon the type of event that is listed in the public notice.

**General Retention Schedule #24
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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
Licensing and Permits		
300	<u>License and/or Permit Applications</u> These files contain applications for licenses and/or permits for various operations within city or village limits, as prescribed by ordinances, such as building, zoning, carnivals, solicitors, garage sales, pets, restaurants, taxis, etc. These records contain applicant information, information about the purpose of the license or permit, and it may contain supplemental documentation, such as blueprints, certificates of liability insurance, surety bonds, indemnity bonds, treasurer's reports, etc. The clerk may maintain a log, index, checklist or other document to keep track of licensees and the payment of fees. ACT = until license or permit expires or is revoked.	ACT+1
301	<u>Liquor License Applications</u> These files contain applications for licenses to sell alcoholic beverages. They records include applications to transfer a license to a new owner and to transfer a license to a new location. These records may include the application, inspections, police reports, payment documentation, local board/commission review/approval documents, etc. The Michigan Liquor Control Commission maintains a duplicate copy of this record. These files include rejected applications. ACT = while the business owns the license (including escrow period).	ACT+10
303	<u>Incomplete License Applications</u> Individuals or businesses may fail to submit complete paperwork to receive a license from the city or village.	CR+1
304	<u>Non-Profit Recognition</u> The city or village may recognize non-profit organizations that wish to use city or village facilities for purposes that may include fundraising. The recognition of the organization does not expire. These files may include correspondence, 501c3 documentation, by-laws and articles of incorporation.	PERM

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
Land and Property		
400	<u>Cemetery Records</u>	PERM
	<p>Cities and villages may own one or more cemeteries. These records document purchasers and occupiers of lots and burials. They may include maps, indexes, burial transit permits, certificates of title for burial rights, purchaser information, deeds for lots, deceased individual information, perpetual care and grounds records, interment and disinterment orders, etc. Cities and villages are encouraged to contact the Archives of Michigan for assistance if they cannot retain these records permanently.</p>	
401	<u>Property Records</u>	PERM
	<p>These records document the ownership of city or village property. They include rights of way, easements, deeds, restrictive covenants, vacated properties, warranty deeds, quit claim deeds, annexations, interlocal agreements, incorporations, etc. Supporting documents may include land surveys, maps and drawings, plans, correspondence, legal property descriptions, agreements, resolutions, bond documentation, title insurance, etc. The county register of deeds will maintain copies of some of these records.</p>	
402	<u>Tax Credits</u>	ACT+7
	<p>Property owners may be eligible for various tax credits (such as farmland preservation, enterprise zone, etc.). These credits are approved by the Michigan Department of Treasury, but they are also reviewed by various township departments and public bodies. These files may include applications, legal property descriptions, etc. ACT = while the property owner is receiving the tax credit.</p>	

**General Retention Schedule #24
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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
Financial and Legal		
500	<u>Insurance Policies</u>	EXP+30
	These files include insurance policies that provide coverage for property and casualty, workers compensation, errors and omission, general liability, umbrella, etc.	
501	<u>Insurance Claims</u>	FY+7
	These files are used to document claims that are submitted to an insurance provider. They may contain claim forms, correspondence and supporting documents for each claim that is submitted.	
502A	<u>Accident Reports/Claims--Adults</u>	CR+7
	Accident reports for personal injuries, property damage claims, and other incidents provide details about any unexpected incidents on city or village property. The reports may list the location of the accident, description of the accident, first aid administration, witnesses, person injured, type of injury or property damage, actions taken, recommendations to prevent reoccurrence, etc. The reports may be reviewed and signed by relevant administrators. These files may include related information, such as witness statements, medical information, legal counsel, subsequent claims, etc.	
502B	<u>Accident Reports/Claims--Minors</u>	ACT+7
	Accident reports for personal injuries, property damage claims, and other incidents provide details about any unexpected incidents on city or village property. The reports may list the location of the accident, description of the accident, first aid administration, witnesses, person injured, type of injury or property damage, actions taken, recommendations to prevent reoccurrence, etc. The reports may be reviewed and signed by relevant administrators. These files may include related information, such as witness statements, medical information, legal counsel, subsequent claims, etc. ACT = until minor turns 18 years old.	
503	<u>Bids and Quotes</u>	ACT+7
	Bids are received from vendors for services and contracts that the city or village needs for construction, furnishings, grounds maintenance, trash and snow removal, cleaning services, etc. These files may include the Invitation to Bid, the bid documents that are submitted, the reviewer	

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
	documentation, etc. This record series includes awarded and non-awarded bid proposals. ACT = until a bid is awarded.	
504	<u>Contracts</u>	EXP+6
	These contracts may cover a variety of services including construction, custodial work, copiers, facility rental, Internet providers, maintenance, wiring, telephone services, employment, land, etc. These files may include contracts, correspondence with the vendor, warranties, copies of purchase orders, etc.	
505	<u>Litigation</u>	ACT+5
	These files document any litigation to which the city or village is a party. The legal/general counsel will maintain the official and complete set of these documents. If the legal counsel is contracted by the city or village, the city or village may agree to be the official record keeper. These files may include depositions, transcripts, decisions, correspondence, data, exhibits, research materials, reports, press releases, media clippings, etc. ACT = until case is closed.	
506	<u>Legal Opinions</u>	PERM
	These records document legal opinions issued by the city or village's legal counsel.	
507	<u>Vital Records</u>	PERM
	Any city that is an active local registrar for vital records (births and deaths), and has been approved by the Department of Community Health for that purpose is obligated to receive, file and retain vital records for that purpose. (MCL 333.2814-333.2815) All other cities and villages shall transfer their vital records to the Department of Community Health for permanent preservation.	
508	<u>Vehicle Files</u>	ACT
	These files document all vehicles owned by the city or village. They may include the registration, title, repair orders, documentation of all maintenance work that is performed, inspections, etc. ACT = while vehicle is owned by the city or village.	
509	<u>Accounting Transaction Detail</u>	FY+7

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
	This information details all revenue, expenditures and balance sheets that are recorded in various accounts maintained by the city or village. It may be retained as paper, electronic data, computer output microfiche, etc.	
510	<u>Chart of Accounts</u>	FY+7
	This chart defines the accounting codes that are used in the accounting transaction detail (see item #508).	
511	<u>Receivables</u>	FY+7
	These records contain invoices that are sent to citizens, groups or companies that are billed for services, such as facility use, event/activity fees, utilities, permits, licenses, etc. They may include support documents, agreements, and ledgers.	
512	<u>Receipts</u>	FY+7
	These records document deposits into various accounts. They may include a cash receipt list, receipt register, etc. Information in these records may include the check number, date, receipt number, description, amount deposited, batch number, account number, etc.	
513	<u>Journal Entries</u>	FY+7
	These records document transfers between accounts, they record expenses not included in accounts payable, and revenues not in cash receipts. The transaction balance report may identify the account number, account description, transaction amount, date, journal entry number, transaction description, etc.	
514	<u>Budget Summaries and Balance Sheets</u>	ACT
	These records document the status of budgetary activity on each account. They may identify the account balances per month and year to date, activity within the month on each account, etc. ACT = while needed to verify the status of financial accounts.	
515	<u>Payment Records</u>	FY+7
	These files document the payment for goods and services. They may include purchase orders, packing slips, vouchers, requisitions, invoices, travel expenses, etc.	

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
516	<u>Telephone/Communications Bills</u> These bills are received from the telephone service provider and may be used to generate bills that are distributed to each department. These bills may cover services for telephones, cellular phones, pagers, etc.	FY+7
517	<u>Bank Activity</u> These records document activity on the city or village's bank account. They may include deposit slips, reconciliations, cancelled checks, bank statements, electronic funds transfer transactions, etc.	FY+7
518	<u>Investments</u> These files include statements from investment accounts that identify the date and amount of each transaction, the maturity and balance of the account. They may include cash flow and reconcile statements that summarize the beginning and ending balance of the account and all transactions dates and amounts.	FY+1
519	<u>Bonds</u> These records detail the terms of bond funding that was secured for construction and improvement projects. They include the final transcript of closing documents. ACT = until the bond matures.	ACT+10
520	<u>Final Affidavit of Payment</u> The final affidavit of payment is evidence that all funds that were borrowed were paid back in full.	PERM
521	<u>Bond Cremation Certificates</u> The Bond Cremation Act (PA 56 of 1962) requires public corporations to cremate or disintegrate obligations or interest coupons upon maturity, and to receive a certificate documenting the destruction of the records.	PERM
522	<u>Supply Inventories</u> These records document the volume of supplies (office, maintenance, etc.) that are purchased and used.	FY+1

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Item Number	Series Title and Description	Total Retention
523	<u>Fixed Asset Inventory Data</u>	ACT
	<p>This record is a list of all major property and its book value. City or village policy determines the value at which property must be included on an inventory. The value of these items is then distributed across the useful life of the property. Information on the inventory may include a description of the item, value, date purchased, depreciation amount, insurable value, building location, etc. ACT = until the annual report for the fiscal year in which the item was disposed is audited.</p>	
524	<u>Fixed Asset Annual Report</u>	FY+7
	<p>The Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) Statement 34 establishes the annual reporting requirements for financial statements prepared by state and local governments. This annual report is produced from the fixed asset inventory.</p>	
525	<u>Audits--Final Report</u>	PERM
	<p>Audit reports are prepared annually by independent accounting firms.</p>	
526	<u>Indirect Costs</u>	FY+7
	<p>These records are created annually to determine the allowable indirect cost rate that the city or village may charge to various state and federal grants.</p>	
527	<u>Surety Bonds</u>	ACT+5
	<p>Officers and employees, especially those who handle money, may need a bond to protect the city or village against theft. These certificates identify the person who is bonded, the bonding company and the amount of the bond. ACT = while employed.</p>	

State of Michigan
Records Management Services

Frequently Asked Questions About General Schedules

Q: What is a public record?

A: The Michigan Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) ([MCL 15.231-15.246](#)) defines public records as recorded information “prepared, owned, used, in the possession of, or retained by a public body in the performance of an official function, from the time it is created.”

Q: Are all records considered to be “official” records?

A: No. General Schedule #1 addresses the retention of “nonrecord” materials. These documents are broadly defined as drafts, duplicates, convenience copies, publications and other materials that do not document agency activities. These materials can be disposed of when they have served their intended purpose. Government agencies need to identify the “office of record” when multiple offices possess copies of the same record. The “office of record” is responsible for following the retention period that is specified, duplicates do not need to be retained. A more comprehensive definition can be found in the approved schedule (available online at http://www.michigan.gov/documents/hal_mhc_rms_GS1_local_110758_7.pdf).

Q: Are the retention periods that are listed on general schedules minimum amounts of time that a record should be kept?

A: Yes. General schedules authorize, but do not require, public officials to dispose of records after the expiration of the assigned retention period. Local situations may require retention beyond the periods listed, and nothing prevents a government agency from retaining records longer than the specified period of time. If records are kept for less than the amount of time listed, the agency can be penalized for unlawful destruction of records. In addition, if records are kept too long, they can waste valuable storage space, and they can become a liability to the agency if it receives a FOIA request, or if it becomes involved in litigation.

Q: Does my government agency have to follow a general schedule?

A: Records cannot be lawfully destroyed without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. The purpose of a general schedule is to ensure that all government agencies are following consistent retention practices, and to

prevent individual agencies from having to develop an agency-specific schedule. However, if your government agency does not want to follow an approved general schedule, it would need to get an agency-specific schedule approved. [Note: agency-specific schedules always supersede a general schedule.] Internal policies do not have the force of law that an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule has.

Q: What is an agency-specific schedule?

A: Agency-specific schedules are Retention and Disposal Schedules that only apply to the agency listed on the document. They are intended to cover records that are unique to that specific agency. Records that are listed on an approved general schedule should not be listed on an agency-specific schedule, unless the agency has a unique situation that justifies a different retention period than the one everyone else is following. The instructions and forms for agency-specific schedules are available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

Q: What should my government agency do if we create a record that is not listed on the general schedule?

A: The general schedule covers records that are common to most government agencies. However, general schedules do not claim to be inclusive of every record that all agencies create. Records that are not listed on general schedules cannot be destroyed without the authorization of an approved agency-specific schedule.

Q: What should my government agency do if we do not create a record that is listed on the general schedule?

A: Nothing. General schedules do not mandate that any of the records listed on the schedule be created. However, if they are created in the normal course of business, the schedule establishes a retention period for them.

Q: What do the codes in the Total Retention column mean?

A: The **retention codes** that appear on the schedule are used to establish how long records are retained by the creating agency before they are destroyed. Retention codes determine how destruction dates will be automatically calculated by Versatile (Versatile is the records management software that is used by Records Management Services to manage the retention of records), and the date upon which the calculation will be based. Definitions of these codes can be found in the Records Management Manual that is available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

Q: What do the numbers in the Total Retention column represent?

A: In addition to the retention code, a period of time, years and/or months, can be used in the calculation of the retention period. Years are expressed as whole numbers, and months are expressed as fractions. For example, the fraction "0/6" would represent 6 months. The retention code plus the period of time results in a mathematical formula that is used to determine a disposal date.

Q: Do the general schedules only cover paper records, or do they cover databases and other electronic records too?

A: Records can exist in a wide variety of formats, including paper, maps, photographs, digital images, e-mail messages, databases, etc. The retention periods listed on the general schedules do not specify the format that the record may exist in, because each government agency that adopts the schedule may choose to retain its records using different recording media. Government agencies are responsible for ensuring that their records, regardless of format, are properly retained and remain accessible during this entire retention period. Various laws (including the Records Reproduction Act) identify acceptable formats for retaining public records; agencies are responsible for understanding and complying with these laws.

Q: Do the general schedules cover e-mail?

A: Yes. Many of the record series that are listed on the general schedules may originate as e-mail. Those e-mail messages need to be retained for the period of time specified by the schedule. For more information about e-mail retention, please check out the online guide at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

Q: Can records be microfilmed or digitally imaged?

A: Yes. The Records Reproduction Act (MCL 24.401-24.406) regulates the reproduction of public records by Michigan government agencies at all levels. This law requires the Records Management Services to promulgate technical standards to ensure the continued accessibility and usability of records that are microfilmed or digitized throughout their retention period. The standards are also intended to help state and local governments ensure the integrity and authenticity of their records. The Records Management Services administers competitively bid master contracts for microfilming and imaging services. State agencies and local governments are eligible to use these contracts to receive these services. More information is available online at <http://www.michigan.gov/recordsmanagement/>.

Q: How can I determine which records that are listed on the general schedules contain confidential information that should not be released to the public?

A: Select records series that are listed on the general schedules may be exempt from public disclosure, in accordance with the provisions of state and federal laws. Please consult with your attorney if you need additional information.

Q: Is there an appropriate way to destroy records that contain confidential information?

A: Yes. Some public records contain sensitive or confidential information. These records should not be placed in a regular trash or recycle bin when they are destroyed. It is important that government agencies ensure that these records are destroyed in a manner that prevents the inappropriate release of the information. The State of Michigan administers a master contract with a vendor that complies with the state's requirements for confidential destruction of records. Government agencies that are interested in using this contract should contact the vendor: Rapid Shred, Attention: Scott Dennis, 616-735-2900. Confidential electronic records should be destroyed in accordance with the U.S. Department of Defense "Standard Industrial Security Program Operating Manual" (DoD 5220.22-M).

Q: Who is responsible for ensuring that Retention and Disposal Schedules are followed?

A: The Michigan Penal Code (MCL 750.491) establishes misdemeanor penalties for disposing of records without the authorization of an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule. Government agency directors are responsible for ensuring that relevant staff are aware of the provisions in the schedule and follow them. The Records Management Services does not audit agencies and assess penalties. However, courts may penalize agencies for failing to follow an approved Retention and Disposal Schedule.

Q: What should I do if I have suggestions for revising a general schedule?

A: Contact the Records Management Services at (517) 335-9132.